DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 086 674 SP 007 614

AUTHOR	Selden, David; Darland, David
TITLE	Teacher Centers: Who's in Charge?
PUB DATE	[72]
NOTE	14p.
EDRS PRICE	MF-$0.65 HC-$3.29
DESCRIPTORS	*Continuous Learning; Educational Improvement; Financial Support; *Governance; *Inservice Teacher Education; Models; *Teacher Centers; *Teacher Participation; Teacher Responsibility; Teacher Role

ABSTRACT

The authors state that educational renewal cannot be broached with the meager funds collected by the U.S. Office of Education; staffing ratios, supplies, equipment, and plant cannot be attended to realistically. However, the teacher center, as it focuses on methods and resource organization, is found to be a useful renewal tool. The authors critique four alternative models of the teacher center: the British model; a centralized bureaucratic model, like the one in Japan; a decentralized model, run by an official board of education agency; and an autonomous model, run by teachers. The latter is found to be the most satisfactory. Basically, it is described as being governed by teachers (with an advisory board from outside the teacher ranks) for teachers and other nonsupervisory instructional personnel. Operated as a nonprofit corporation, it looks to federal and state funds for permanancy. (LP/JA)

ED 086674

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

TEACHER CENTERS: WHO'S IN CHARGE?

David Selden, President
American Federation of Teachers, AFL-CIO

David Darland, Associate Executive Secretary
National Education Association

1972

Despite recent attempts to rearrange the structure of American education through the use of modular programming, paraprofessionals, computer-assisted instruction, differentiated staffing and other devices, the teacher remains central to the educational enterprise. Nevertheless, teachers continue to be treated as though they were interchangeable labor units following the plans of curriculum directors and administrators. There is a growing realization, however, that whatever else is needed for effective education (1) schools cannot succeed without effective teachers, and (2) teachers cannot be effective unless they have confidence that what they are doing is "right." The best way for teachers to acquire this confidence is to make sure that they are involved in the design of the educational process as well as its execution. Good curricula, creative instructional materials, efficient organization and management, modern facilities and equipment -- all of these contribute to the effectiveness of education. But all depend for their full realization upon the skill, the wisdom and the commitment of teachers.

American educators, probably more than any other national education group, have been preoccupied with method. But despite constant efforts to simplify and routinize the work of teachers through the use of syllabi, programmed materials, and "by-the-numbers" techniques,

SP 007 614

FILMED FROM BEST AVAILABLE COPY

effective teaching remains a complex, demanding endeavor requiring intellectual capacity, intensive training, and constant re-examination and continuing development. We are concerned here with the phase of teacher development commonly called in-service training.

Changing American Education

In-service training has a bad reputation among teachers. For nearly half a century American teachers have been required to attend courses throughout their working careers. Too many of these classes have been spiritless time-fillers. Instead of promoting educational change and teacher renewal, in-service courses have tended to increase teacher resistance to new methods and concepts. Teacher bargaining agents now regularly include elimination of "Mickey Mouse" in-service courses as a standard working condition improvement demand.

Teacher resistance to in-service courses is reinforced by the general feeling among teachers that they are scapegoats for the failure of society to function satisfactorily for many Americans. Most teachers try hard to do a good job. Given a fair-sized class of middle-class kids and a little help from administrators and supportive personnel, they will succeed. Thrust into large classes in schools surrounded by the violence, crime, filth and poverty of big-city ghettoes, all but the most gifted teachers fail more often than not. Teachers in such nightmarish positions bitterly resent being told that they must "change." "We need help," they say, "not just new methods. Give us smaller classes, more teacher aides, administrators with backbone, and good materials and we will do the job."

Few educational reformers have accepted the teacher view that more money must be invested in education before schools can be made more relevant, human, and positive. During the 50's and 60's, aggressive confrontation with the school establishment became the style. Instead of promoting reform, however, the chief result was a defensive reaction on the part of teachers. It is time now for the reformers to change tactics. Even though it may be difficult a persistent effort must be made to encourage teacher cooperation with reform efforts.

American education has now (January, 1972) reached a crisis of near-catastrophic proportions. The crisis is not only the racial integration impasse, nor is it only the collapse of our system of school finance; our schools simply are not adequate to meet the demands of our time. The urgency of providing effective education for all Americans, particularly those blacks, browns, and other racio-ethnic groups who have been largely excluded from our system, is extreme. But marshalling funds and reconciling racial conflict are political problems; staff development and retraining is a technical - or professional - problem, the solution of which can proceed independently.

Educational Renewal

The present administration of the United States Office of Education, while not conceding the extent of our national educational disaster, nevertheless has projected new and generally hopeful plans for the improvement of education. These center around the concept of "educational renewal." Because funds are limited, expenditures must

be concentrated in the area of greatest need and in accordance with the principle of critical mass. The Office of Education plans to use Title III "discretionary" funds for this purpose. The total amount of such funds will be eventually something like $300 millions but, for fiscal 1972, presently funded programs will consume all but $50 millions. The full amount would not become available until fiscal 1973.

True educational renewal - tearing down and rebuilding educational slums in the urban renewal sense will not be possible with the funds to be made available. True renewal would require replacing structures built in the 20's and before with new buildings adapted to the more cooperative styles of instruction now emerging. It would require large investments in technical equipment and new materials, and it would require significant supplementation of present educational staffs. (Underlying all this, of course, must be the conviction that schools that are good enough can make educational headway against the dirty gritty oceans of human degradation in which they must operate.)

Since educational renewal in a realistic sense cannot be broached with the funds scraped together by pooling present Title III programs, the major thrust of the renewal program will (once again) concentrate on method and resource organization, rather than staffing ratios, supplies, equipment, and plant. This "change" part of the renewal enterprise is now subsumed under the term "teacher center", and out

of financial necessity it has become the chief instrument of "renewal." Whether or not the term "renewal" is appropriate at all to such a limited effort, the teacher center idea is a useful concept.

Teacher Oriented Teacher Centers in Britain

The term "teacher center" was first used in 1965 in Great Britain to describe a sort of teachers' club, the purpose of which was to make it easier for teachers to get together in discussion groups, to see new materials, to watch demonstrations, to attend seminars on educational matters, or just socialize. There are now 400 of these centers. Their increase has been due in large part to the encouragement of both the National Union of Teachers and the National Schools Council.

In Britain the teacher centers are governed by teacher committees, but the chief of staff, the "warden", is hired and paid by the local educational authorities. A person who attended a meeting of wardens found that they were much conflicted about their roles and responsibilities. Many of them are finding it difficult to fulfill the teacher service function of the center and at the same time be responsive to the local education authorities. Even so, the British teacher center is a unique development designed to improve education by serving teachers rather than instructing or directing them.

In part, the teacher-oriented nature of the British teacher center stems from the decentralized and teacher-oriented nature of the British educational establishment. The economic and status gaps between administrators and teachers in Britain are smaller than anywhere else in the

world. Thus it is expected that teachers take responsibility for their own improvement and renovation. Contrary to the fears of American educational critics that "the bureaucracy cannot reform itself", British teachers have been outstandingly innovative in the period since World War II and the teacher center is viewed as contributing to the acceptance of new ideas and methods, rather than serving as a citadel of teacher conservatism.

The British experience provides much useful information, but other alternatives should be examined.

A Centralized Bureaucratic Teacher Development Alternative

In contrast to the British system, the problem of teacher improvement and renovation in Japan is handled through a highly centralized and bureaucratic apparatus. Japan has three grades of teaching certificates based largely on academic preparation. Although the difference in economic status between holders of each of the certificates is not great, there is a tremendous drive by the holders of the lower two certificates to become "fully qualified." The Japanese have not yet adopted the skeptical attitude of most American teachers toward higher education in general and in-service education in particular.

There are teacher education centers at the prefecture level and there is also a national institution. They resemble American teacher training institutions in big cities, including many of the advantages of such institutions as well as the disadvantages. The theory behind the Japanese system is that the teachers are offered additional training

on a take-it-or-leave-it basis. Hence, the question of teacher control of the in-service or extra service training institutions seems not to have occurred to anybody.

The system of graded certificates seems to offer a way to compel teachers to continue their education over a long span of years. Attempts to transfer this concept to the United States would almost certainly arouse great teacher resistance, but it works in Japan, probably because of the generally hierarchical and conforming nature of Japanese society. American teachers have, in the last decade or so, succeeded in off-setting some of the authoritarianism in American education by the development of collective bargaining and more effective lobbying techniques at the state level. They would not easily hand such an instrument of coercion to school officials.

Attempts to establish differentiated certificates in the United States have been strongly resisted by teacher organizations, precisely because teachers would be forced to enter long series of courses. Furthermore, to the extent "graduation" from one certificate to another would depend upon a satisfactory service evaluation by administrators, the multi-level system would be a form of "merit rating."

The point of this discussion is that attempts to impose additional education on teachers by state and federal government would almost certainly arouse violent opposition from teacher organizations -- and thus the whole scheme would be likely to fail, just as similar forced in-service training has failed in the past.

A Decentralized Bureaucratic Model

It would be possible, of course, to conduct continuing teacher development through an agency of a local education authority. An administrator would be appointed (and paid by) a school board, presumably subsidized by USOE. The director would be responsible for developing plans for a continuing teacher education project, and after approval by the superintendent of schools and perhaps the school board, would be given the authority to implement the plans.

The decentralized bureaucratic model has some advantages. Once the structure of the project was established and personnel placed on the payroll, there would be a tendency (not necessarily overwhelming) for the local board of education to continue financial support even if the federal government were to withdraw from the field. Furthermore, the program of the training agency could be tailored to local needs. The curse of authoritarianism could be somewhat counteracted by a teacher advisory committee. Finally, local school districts do have a wide range of resources and these could be utilized more easily by an agency which was a part of the system than they could be utilized by an autonomous agency.

But, the force inherent in an official board of education agency would constitute a barrier which even the most benign director would have difficulty overcoming. An official board of education agency would take the responsibility for technical improvement out of the hands of teachers. Once again, teachers would be responding to administrators rather than engaging in the problem-solving process through their own initiative and energy.

An Autonomous Model

It would be possible to establish an autonomous, self-governing teacher center through the common device of the non-profit corporation. A charter or constitution could be drawn up in cooperation with teacher representatives, and the center would be officially incorporated under the laws of the state. A board of directors would then be chosen and the board of directors would in turn choose an executive director and other staff members as needed.

Note: The term "teacher representatives" above refers to representatives selected by teachers. Where there is a bargaining agent, this means that the representatives should be chosen by the bargaining agent. Where there is no bargaining agent, the representatives should be chosen jointly by the significant teacher organizations in the center's service area. If more than one school district is to be served, the bargaining agent for each district should select an appropriate number of members of the board.

Under the non-profit corporation form of governance, it would not be wrong to have all the members of the board of directors chosen in the way described above. If this were the case, there should be an advisory council to guide the teacher-controlled board of directors. The advisory council would include university, community, and administration representatives.

It would be possible to include university, community, and administrative representatives on the board of directors itself, of course, but in that case teachers should be in the voting majority.

Parity

The above discussion brings us to consideration of the concept of "parity." .Educational reform, for better or worse, has a variegated but quite clearly defined constituency. On the accepted reformist dogma that the system cannot reform itself, the governing board of the teacher center or renewal center was originally planned to include representatives of teacher training institutions as well as representatives of the school Establishment, and to emphasize the point the board was called a "parity board." Later, when "community leaders" demanded a piece of the action, they were also inserted into the plan and, still later, some of the proposals called for student representatives as well.

At present, there are 14 agencies called teacher centers which are financed directly by the United States Office of Education. All 14 are housed in universities or other teacher training institutions. They function as R&D centers for classroom ideas, and as retailing outlets for educational ideas and techniques. Their clientele is revolving and transitory and without formal participation in governing the projects, for the most part, but the "parity" concept is kept in one form or another.

From what we have said in previous sections of this paper, it should be clear that we do not believe "parity" in a governing or operating equality sense can have practical meaning in teacher center governance. Yet the stimulation which can come from the college intellectual community, minority groups, and the young is a valuable ingredient in educational reform which should not be neglected. Hence the need for a strong advisory board.

Non-Teaching Staff

If we abandon the parity principle in teacher center governance, how exclusive should the center be in its clientele? Should the teacher center be concerned only with the craft of teaching, or should it be concerned with over-all staff development? If other staff functions are to be served by the center, should not representatives of such groups be included on the governing board? And should not the name be changed to "staff center?"

First, we can be very positive about the need to exclude principals and other administrators from the scope of the "teacher center." Certainly administrators need retraining; their re-education may be crucial to the educational renewal effort, in fact. But unless administrators are carefully segregated in the functioning and governance of the center, their presence will inevitably defeat the purposes of the agency. They are too assertive; too used to exercising authority, and they have too much spare time to carry out their purposes to be assimilated easily. The best idea is to exclude administrators, leaving their retraining to other agencies.

How about other non-teaching educational personnel? In school systems - or fractions of school systems designated as renewal sites - which are into differentiated staffing, the center should serve all non-supervisory personnel who are directly involved in the instructional/learning process. In such a case, however, not every rank or functional group need have representation on the governing board. Representation

of "paraprofessionals" in addition to teachers should suffice. The same could be said for more traditional set-ups using only teachers and teacher aides in the classroom.

So far as guidance counsellors, social workers, psychologists, curriculum coordinators, community coordinators, nurses, et al., are concerned, it would be better to set up school by school arrangements for their participation in policy-making and technique development, rather than set such groups up as special interests in the governmental structure.

Financial Arrangements

The federal government still regards itself as a sort of good Samaritan and emergency helper of the educational enterprise, rather than a permanent partner. In accordance with this almost dilletante approach, the USOE has been talking about a two-year phase-out of federal assistance in educational renewal and teacher centers. Yet all evidence supports an outlook which is just the contrary.

We said earlier that American Education is rapidly approaching a crisis of catastrophic proportions. This crisis cannot be solved by local and state action. Inevitably the federal government with its broad taxing power and national interest policy concerns must undertake a massive support program - and there is no prospect that that program can ever be diminished let alone discontinued. That being the case it is unrealistic to talk in terms of a two-year phase-out of such a vital activity as the teacher centers.

It doesn't seem to us that it would be possible to operate much of a teacher center for under $250,000 a year. It would be quite easy to spend many times this amount considering what has been happening to local school budgets. It would be impossible to generate such funds from local sources alone. Therefore, it is essential that there be an open-ended commitment from the federal government as well as state and local sources.

Control of the expenditure of funds should be in the hands of the Board of Directors of the non-profit corporation. Its annual budget, however, would require approval by the contributing governments. There is nothing unusual in such an arrangement. Almost all big city budgets must run this sort of gauntlet.

Summary

A summary of the views expressed in this paper is as follows:

1. Schools cannot succeed without effective teachers and teachers cannot be effective unless they have confidence that what they are doing is right.

2. Traditional methods of in-service training have not been successful in improving teacher performance; teachers must take responsibility for their own professional development.

3. The main instrument of educational renewal so far as methods and techniques are concerned should be the teacher center.

4. Teacher centers should be autonomous and teacher controlled -- non-profit corporation is the most promising model.

5. Teacher centers should concentrate on the development of improved teaching as distinguished from other aspects of school operations.

6. Parents, community leaders, universities and students should be represented on advisory councils, not "parity boards."

7. Teacher centers should be viewed as permanent organizations with on-going financial commitments from all levels of government.

DS:ES:mg

opeiu2aflcio